

Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve

Update, March 20, 2004

A primary concern that was expressed at the November 2003 scoping meeting was that WDNR needed to slow down the planning process for the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve. So we have slowed down in order to develop a management plan that will be effective and appropriate for the Cherry Point site.

What have we been doing?

Through March 18, 2004, Phil Bloch, David Palazzi and WDNR region staff have been meeting with constituents to talk about the Cherry Point site. Constituents consulted to date include Jeff Chalfont with Whatcom County Planning, Whatcom County Council member Sharon Roy, Lummi Tribal resources managers, Department of Ecology Bellingham Office staff, Department of Ecology industrial outfall section staff, Whatcom County Marine Resources Committee (MRC), the Birch Bay Water and Sewer District # 8, Birch Bay State Park, Birch Bay Steering Committee, WDFW LaConner office staff, Resources, the North Sound Bay Keeper, British Petroleum (BP), Conoco Phillips, Intalco, Pacific International Terminal representatives and Trillium Corporation.

Future discussions are scheduled with Puget Sound Action Team, Whatcom County Public Utility District, the Nooksack Tribe, and representatives for the proposed GSX pipeline.

Others?

Please let us know if you have suggestions of other groups or individuals that we should meet with to talk about management of the site.

Developing the management plan goals and strategies

We planning to convene the Cherry Point Technical work group to help us characterize the resources, existing conditions, guidance for developing a monitoring plan, and to identify the existing impacts and potential risks at the site.

We will then engage regulatory managers to assist in developing goals for the site, management measures to support these goals, and an approach for evaluating the progress and success of meeting the goals and management measures for the site. We will invite the Lummi Tribe, Nooksack Tribe, Whatcom County, Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Health, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Army Corps of Engineers to be involved in this process.

We hope to be conducting this work over the next several months. From this information we will develop specific management strategies, issues and goals to include in the draft management plan that will be provided for public review and comment.

After these steps are complete we will review the draft plan in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Other Work

Whatcom County MRC

Consistent with their role, the Whatcom County MRC is proposing to conduct a public forum in order to solicit input on the proposed reserve and management options. This will be done independently from the WDNR process. However, the MRC will be coordinating the timing of the forum with WDNR's process. We appreciate the MRC's continued interest and involvement with the aquatic reserve program.

Petroleum Industry Discussions

WDNR is engaged in an ongoing effort with the Cherry Point and Fidalgo Bay petroleum industries to resolve concerns expressed about establishing an aquatic reserve adjacent to refinery operations. We have agreed upon the issues that need to be addressed and hope to develop solutions that will ensure the long-term conservation of the habitat and species identified at the site.

If you have questions or other interests in the site, please contact David Palazzi: 360-902-1069, david.palazzi@wadnr.gov.